## BEFORE THE ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION

Illinois Commerce Commission
On Its Ówn Motion
-vs-

Central Illinois Light Company,

Central Illinois Public Service Company,

Commonwealth Edison Company,

Illinois Power Company,

Interstate Power Company,

MidAmerican Energy Company,

Mt. Carmel Public Utility Company,

South Beloit Water, Gas and Electric Company, and

Union Electric Company

Proceeding on the Commission's own : motion concerning delivery service tariffs: of all Illinois electric utilities to determine: what if any changes should be ordered to: promote statewide uniformity of delivery: services and related tariff offerings :

Docket No. 00-0494

**Rebuttal Testimony Of** 

**KENNAN J. WALSH** 

On Behalf Of

NEWENERGY MIDWEST, L.L.C.

**NOVEMBER 21, 2000** 

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Date 12-14-00 Coport	or <u>cß</u>

1	Q.	Please state your name and business address.
2	A.	Kennan J. Walsh. NewEnergy Midwest, L.L.C., 309 W
3		Washington, Suite 1100, Chicago, Illinois 60606.
4		
5	Q.	Mr. Walsh, are you the same person who filed Direct Testimony in
6		this proceeding for NewEnergy?
7	A.	Yes.
8 .	,	
9	Q.	What is the purpose of your Rebuttal Testimony?
10	A.	The purpose of my Rebuttal Testimony is to respond to the Direc
11		Testimonies of Commonwealth Edison Co. ("ComEd") Witness Sally T
12		Clair, Ameren Services Company ("Ameren") Witness Keith P. Hock
13		Alliant Energy Corporate Services, Inc. ("Alliant") Witness Marc A. Nielsen
14		MidAmerican Energy Co. ("MidAmerican") Witness Debra L. Kutsunis, and
15		Illinois Commerce Commission ("ICC") Witness Eric P. Schlaf.
16		
17	Q.	Do you agree with ComEd's Witness Clair's assertion on page 4 or
18		her testimony in this proceeding that Section 16-118(b) of the Public
19		Utilities Act ("the Act") supports ComEd's position that a Retail Electric
20		Supplier ("RES") must include on the single bill sent to its customers any
21		and all outstanding balances that the customer owes to ComEd for tariffed
22		services.

No.

1	Q.	Why	not?
1	<b>⇔</b> (.	vviiy	1101:

A.	I believe Section 16-118(b) of the Act refers specifically to charges
	that should be included on a single bill are those from RESs and delivery
	services provided by a utility and not "any and all outstanding balances
	that the customer owes", as Ms. Clair claims, for tariffed services that
	would include outstanding balances attributed to bundled tariff service.

Q.

What evidence do you have to support your opinion as stated above?

A. First, I believe the sentence prior to and after the one quoted from the Act by Ms. Clair in her testimony on page 4 should be included so that a more complete picture of what a single bill from a RES should look like.

The Act states at Section 16-118(b):

"An electric utility shall file a tariff pursuant to Article IX of the Act that would allow alternative retail electric suppliers or electric utilities other than the electric utility in whose service area retail customers are located to issue single bills to the retail customers for both the services provided by such alternative retail electric supplier or other electric utility and the delivery services provided by the electric utility to such customers. The tariff filed pursuant to this subsection shall (i) require partial payments made by retail customers to be credited first to the electric utility's tariffed

credit and collection, including requests for deposits..." (Emphasis added)

Clearly, the first sentence of Section 16-118(b) means that the services to be billed on a single bill are (1) those energy related services provided by an alternative retail electric supplier ("ARES") or utilities other than the electric utility (not ComEd) in whose service area the retail

services, (ii) impose commercially reasonable terms with respect to

customers receiving the issued single bills reside, and (2) delivery services provided by the electric utility (ComEd) in whose service area the retail customers receiving the issued single bills reside. When Section 16-118(b) is read in its entirety, it seems apparent that the "tariffed services" designated in this Section are delivery services. The SBO tariff in no way makes a RES offering the SBO a bill collector for past utility bundled services charges.

Second, ICC Witness Schlaf agrees with NewEnergy's interpretation of Section 16-118(b). He states on page 19 of his testimony:

"It is Staff's position that Sec. 16-118(b) refers to the payment of charges for the provision of delivery services only, rather than to payment for charges for any other services rendered by the utility to the customer, such as bundled services or non-electric services. Thus, with regard to Question (6), it is my understanding that money remitted to a utility through single billing should be applied against the utility's delivery services charges only." (ICC Witness Eric P. Schlaf Direct Testimony, page 19, lines 435-439)

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Third, after a broad perusal of the Illinois Electric utility delivery services tariffs, it is my understanding that ComEd and Ameren are alone in requiring RESs to include unpaid balances for bundled service on single bills. Simply put, for ComEd, collection of unpaid balances attributable to bundled service appears neither in its Rider SBO nor in its approved Implementation Plan filed with the ICC. In fact, ComEd's Revised February 15, 2000 Implementation Plan states on page 77 under "5. Collection Notices."

"ComEd will continue to send collection notices to customers for charges for services rendered by ComEd, following current collection policies as approved by the ICC regardless of whether the Retail Electric Supplier has selected the Single Billing Option. The supplier is responsible for its own collection processing."

It appears from this provision in its Implementation Plan that ComEd will continue to monitor bundled balances and will send collection notices for any outstanding bundled balances even if that customer is receiving a single bill from its RES. If this is so, then why can't ComEd follow up the Collection Notices with a separate bill for those outstanding balances they are sending notices for? It appears that after reading Rider SBO and their Implementation Plan and Ms. Clair's testimony, ComEd may have conflicting internal business practices.

Illinois Power, MidAmerican, and Mt. Carmel **do not** require RESs to collect for unpaid balances for bundled services and thus do not require RESs to include unpaid balances for bundled service on single bills. I was unable to determine from Central Illinois Light Company's ("CILCO") tariff if CILCO required RESs to include unpaid bundled service balance on single bills. However, CILCO's Rate 35, Sheet 87 states:

"Customers switching from Company-supplied power and energy must be current on their payments for Company-supplied electricity services with no overdue amounts."

This provision in CILCO's tariff can be interpreted as to mean that a bundled customer that switches to delivery services cannot have an unpaid balance for bundled service. With that interpretation, the issue of a RES including an unpaid balance for bundled services and collecting that

unpaid balance should be moot for CILCO and any RES issuing single bills for its customers taking delivery services from CILCO.

Likewise, it is unclear in Alliant's tariffs if Alliant requires RESs to include unpaid balances for bundled service on single bills. However, Alliant Witness Nielsen does focus on the posting order of single billing remittances. The following is an excerpt from his testimony.

- Q. Is this issue [posting order of single billing remittances] relevant to the Companies?
- A. No. The Companies' tariffs specify that all single billing will be done by the RES, at the RES's option. The tariffs also require the RES to pay the Companies all **delivery charges** related to serving the RES's customers if the RES elects the single billing option. Given these conditions, the issue of posting order of partial payments is moot for SBWGE and IPC. (Emphasis added) (Alliant Witness Marc A. Nielsen Direct Testimony, pages 5 and 6, lines 87 92)

It is clear from Mr. Nielsen's testimony that the RES is required "to pay the Companies all delivery charges related to serving the RES's customers if the RES elects the single billing option." He does not state that RESs are responsible to collect and pay the Companies unpaid balances for bundled service. So, apparently Alliant believes the billing and collection of unpaid balances for bundled service remains with the utility.

Furthermore, MidAmerican Witness Kutsunis' testimony points out many of the concerns that I stated in my testimony regarding the requirement of RESs to include unpaid balances for bundled service on single bills. Ms. Kutsunis basically reached the same general conclusion for such a requirement as I did by stating "It is simply not an acceptable

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1		business practice." (MidAmerican Witness Debra L. Kutsunis Direct
2		Testimony, page 3, lines 15-16)
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4	Q.	Do you agree with Ms. Clair's assertion on page 6, lines 113
5		through 120 that eliminating the requirement that the single bill contain all
6		outstanding charges owed to ComEd for tariffed services would mean the
7		existing single billing option credit would be overstated?
8	· A.	No. As I pointed out in my Direct Testimony, the Commission has
9		found that the Single Billing Option ("SBO") credit does not include any
10		functions related to billing for bundled services. The Commission found in
1 1		its Third Interim Order in Docket No. 99-0013:
112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119		"The Commission concludes that the unbundling of billing should be limited to the SBO and the billing functions that are part of the 16 unbundled metering processes in the MOU. As ComEd noted, functions already unbundled through implementation of the SBO include compiling and formatting the <b>delivery services bill</b> , printing the <b>delivery services bill</b> , sending the bill and processing payments made in response." (Emphasis added) (ICC's Third Interim Order, Docket No. 99-0013, page 26, dated December 22, 1999)  Ameren Witness Hock makes the same claim in his testimony:
21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28		"If those RES do not include on the bill unpaid balances for these [bundled] services, the utilities will need to continue to bill the customer for those balances. That will eliminate the basis for the creditthat retail customers receive from Ameren when their RES has elected the SBO; that credit is being given precisely because the Company will not have to send bills to those customers." (Ameren Witness Keith P. Hock, Direct Testimony, page 4, lines 78 –84)
29 30		If Ameren and ComEd have included both bundled and unbundled
31		costs in their SBO credit calculation, then that is their error. The passage
32		above from the Commission's Third Interim Order in Docket No. 99-0013

is clear; the SBO credit was intended to cover, as ComEd apparently noted in its testimony, delivery services functions. Now, ComEd and Ameren want the Commission to believe that there are bundled costs included in their SBO credit and if the requirement that RESs include unpaid balances for bundled services is eliminated, then the SBO credit should be reduced or eliminated. The Commission should not fall for that argument and should ignore the utilities' threats to seek a reduction in or the elimination of their SBO credits.

Q.

In your opinion, do you agree with ComEd Witness Clair's assertion that it would not be practical for ComEd to send a customer a separate bill for outstanding balances for services other than delivery services?

No. On page 7 of her testimony, Ms Clair states; "...ComEd's billing system is set up to trace previous customer's balances based upon a variety of field indicators. If a new account is established, the system automatically searches for common information, such as customer name and billing address. Once the system traces the new account to the previous customer account, the system applies the full balance (including the outstanding charges owed to ComEd) to the new account." This passage from her testimony raises some questions. Why does a customer's previous balance have to be added to a customer's new account balance? Why couldn't a "field indicator" be used to designate a separate bundled balance? If a separate "field indicator" could be used to

indicate a customer switch to delivery services, couldn't that trigger a bill for "previous customer balance" that would be tied to bundled service? Perhaps the Commission Staff may have their own questions as to what billing system limitations may exist for ComEd and/or Ameren that would prevent them from modifying their systems to separately bill for unpaid balances for bundled services.

Apparently, separate billing for unpaid balances for bundled service for customers who have switched or may switch in the future to delivery services is not a problem for at least Illinois Power, MidAmerican and Mt. Carmel. Perhaps ComEd and Ameren should consult with their utility brethren how they have or intend to implement separate billing and collecting any unpaid balances customers may have prior to taking delivery services. It should not be the design or operating specifications of ComEd's billing system that should govern, but the SBO tariff and the Law.

Q.

If the Commission orders certain utilities to modify their billing systems to separately bill their customers for unpaid balances from bundled service prior to switching to delivery services, would you be opposed to utilities recovering any costs incurred?

**A**.22

If the utilities can prove that these costs were prudently incurred, I would not be opposed to the utilities recovering those incurred costs if approved by the ICC.

Q. How do you envision the mechanism for cost recovery to be?

I'm sure the utilities in question would have their own strategies for recovering additional costs, if any, for any modifications to their systems to be able to separately bill and collect unpaid balances for bundled service from customers switching to delivery services. One strategy that comes to mind is seeking cost recovery in their Residential Delivery Services rate

Q.

A.

case.

Do you agree with Ms. Clair's rationale in her explanation for why ComEd has chosen the business practice of posting **any** outstanding balance owed to ComEd will be applied to the customer's oldest balance first?

No. As I explained in my Direct Testimony starting on page 13, ComEd (and possibly Ameren) has complicated the issue of the posting order of single billing remittances. The example I give in my Direct Testimony on pages 15 and 16 illustrates my point. After reading Ms. Clair's testimony at pages 9 – 11, it is apparent that ComEd has developed a payment-posting practice that only makes life easier for ComEd and frustrates delivery services customers who want to receive an accurate and understandable single bill and those RESs who choose to provide single billing services. MidAmerican Witness Ms. Kutsunis also accurately articulates in her Direct Testimony on pages 5 and 6 that when

a payment-posting practice, such as the one ComEd has chosen to implement, is used, customer confusion is a likely result.

Q.

Just to be clear, if the delivery services customer only makes a partial payment on the RES's single bill, what is NewEnergy's position?

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Assuming there is no unpaid balance for bundled service on the single bill because the Commission has affirmed that there is no such requirement and has also ruled that a posting-payment practice such as the one ComEd has implemented is not appropriate and should be modified to account separately for bundled and delivery services payments, the RES is obligated to make the utility whole for the delivery services charges and any applicable taxes and fees. Any shortfall in the customer's payment to the RES becomes the customer's unpaid balance with the RES.

NewEnergy's only issue with the posting order of single billing remittances is when a utility, like ComEd, on its own initiative, has implemented a posting logic that shifts a customer's delivery services payment to any outstanding balances prior to that customer switching to delivery services. NewEnergy is not taking a position that a utility who practices this sort of payment-posting policy, like ComEd and possibly Ameren, should not be entitled to collect for any outstanding balances that a customer may have with that utility prior to that customer switching to delivery services. However, NewEnergy is opposed to such a utility

implementing a payment-posting policy that essentially makes a RES an unpaid collection agency for a customer's outstanding debts to the utility and transfers a customer's payment for one service to an outstanding balance incurred from a different service. This type of payment-posting policy is not a good business practice, is commercially unreasonable, legally questionable and is self-serving. Such a policy results in customer confusion that leads to strained relationships between the RES and its customers and the shifting of a utility liability to a RES liability.

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Q. Please explain what you mean by "the shifting of a utility liability to a RES liability".

A. When a customer has an unpaid balance for bundled service with a 12 utility, it is a utility's responsibility to collect for that customers outstanding 13 14 balance. However, when a utility takes a delivery services payment from 15 a customer and applies that payment to that customer's oldest outstanding balance, which would be for bundled service, that customer's delivery 16 services account with the utility will show an unpaid balance and 17 according to the utility's SBO tariff, becomes the responsibility of the RES 18 19 to collect. In the customer's mind and on the RES's books, that customer 20 has paid its delivery services portion of its single bill in full. In the utility's mind, it no longer needs to worry about going after a customer's debt for 21 bundled service and can now go after a RESs SBO surety bond, if it so 22

chooses, because the utility has now classified the debt as a delivery services unpaid balance and the RESs responsibility to collect.

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Q.

Do you have any proof that a utility has essentially taken payments for delivery services that was remitted by NewEnergy and applied those payments to outstanding bundled service balances?

Α.

Yes. Attached to my Rebuttal Testimony is NE Exhibit No. \_\_\_\_ (KJW-3), a letter from a ComEd Account Manager dated October 4, 2000, which states "Attached is a file of the current NewEnergy accounts that have been confirmed to have no outstanding bundled balances." (Emphasis added) It also goes on to state later in the letter, "This letter notifies NewEnergy that the accounts on the attached list have no bundled balances associated with them and that all current and future balances need to be posted and collected by NewEnergy and remitted to ComEd as specified in Rider SBO."" NewEnergy interprets the words "all current and future balances" in the letter to mean delivery services balances. Whereas on ComEd's system there may be no bundled balances for NewEnergy accounts at the time of ComEd's analysis, NewEnergy's analysis shows something different.

21 Q. What does NewEnergy's analysis show?

22 A.23

~; \*\* NewEnergy's analysis shows that approximately 100 of its accounts has what NewEnergy would consider outstanding balances that are

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attributable to bundled service. This analysis was done by reviewing EDI and manual 810-transaction information from ComEd, primarily for billing cycles ending in October. The balances shown from the 810 information was compared to NewEnergy's ledgers for its customers taking delivery service from ComEd. NewEnergy's ledgers show that all of these approximately 100 customers have paid their delivery services portion of the bill and those payments were remitted to ComEd. If there were any outstanding balances on NewEnergy's books for these customers, it would be a customer's unpaid balance to NewEnergy for its services to the customer because NewEnergy is obligated under Section 16-118(b) of the Act to make ComEd whole for its delivery services charges in the event of partial payments from customers.

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Q.

Α.

Given NewEnergy's analysis, could the outstanding balances from the 810 information be attributable to what Ms. Clair claims on page 11 of her Direct Testimony as "...due to timing delays in sending or receiving payments, e.g., bills and checks simply cross in the mail."?

 No. NewEnergy accounted for this possibility in its analysis and the nearly all customers in question had bundled balances prior to the July billing cycle and at least half of the customers had bundled balances as far back as 1999. Remember, the 810 information provided by ComEd for billing cycles ending in October 2000 still show these balances as being outstanding. However, according to ComEd's letter dated October 4,

2000 and attached to my testimony as Exhibit KJW-3, these balances are now considered as outstanding unbundled or delivery services balances.

The only conclusion that can be reached from ComEd's statements in its letter to NewEnergy that there are no longer bundled balances for NewEnergy's accounts and the contradicting evidence supplied by 810 information showing outstanding balances for these same accounts that NewEnergy has been tracking on its books since 1999, is that ComEd has applied payments from delivery services to outstanding balances from For these approximately 100 accounts, ComEd has bundled service. shifted the burden of collecting unpaid balances from a service it provided prior to those accounts taking delivery services from itself to the RES providing single billing services. With its policy of posting any payment received by a single-billing RES to any outstanding balance, ComEd has abused the intent of Section 16-118(b) of the Act in allowing a RES "to issue single bills to the retail customers for both the services provided by such alternative retail electric supplier or other electric utility and the delivery services provided by the electric utility to such customers".

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In its analysis, did NewEnergy quantify the shifting of the collection of what ComEd now calls unpaid delivery services balances?

1	Α.	Yes.	ComEd	has	shifted	the	respo	nsibility	of	collecting
2		approximately	\$2.7 mil	lion of	what	was	unpaid	balances	for	bundled
3		service to wha	t ComEd i	s callir	ng unbu	ndled	l balance	es.		

Have you provided an exhibit showing the details behind the \$2.7 million unpaid balance amount?

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Q.

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Q.

No. This is because the analysis contains highly confidential customer data. However, NewEnergy would be more than willing to share this information with the Commission Staff and ComEd if a confidentiality agreement was signed.

## What is your recommendation?

It is simply not enough to eliminate the utility practice of forwarding unpaid bundled service balances on single bills for delivery service. The Commission must also order utilities, in a uniform manner, to **separately** account for outstanding bundled service balances and delivery services balances. Furthermore, the utilities should **separately** bill for any unpaid bundled service balances until such balances are resolved. These separate bills should be sent directly to the customer by the utility under a separate mailing that does not involve a RES. As I pointed out in my Direct Testimony on pages 12 and 13, the uniform business practices ("UBP") group has addressed this issue.

1 2	"In a final document dated August 1, 2000, Section V of its Report addresses Billing and Payment Processing.""It specifically says:
3	addresses simily and taymoner researching. In the speciment, eage.
4 5	(8) Past Due Balance Prior to Switching
J	· ·
6	(a) Outstanding prior balances are not transferred unless
7	mutually agreed upon by both parties. The Non-Billing Party will continue
8 9	to bill the Customer separately for any outstanding balances until such balances are fully paid off. (UBP August 1, 2000 Report, Section V, page
10	39)"
11	
12	Ms. Clair, in her Direct Testimony on page 2, lines 33 – 44 stated
13	that:
14	"As part of my duties, I am extensively involved with the Uniform
15	Business Practice ("UBP") efforts on a national level.""The UBP
16	has focused its efforts on establishing common business
17	processes, rather than producing uniform terms and conditions or
18	uniform tariff provisions.""establishing common business
19 20	practices is the key that permits to do business in different service territories and across state lines. ComEd has aligned itself with
21	this goal, and has developed business processes that are
22	consistent with that objective." (Emphasis added)
23	
24	As I have shown above and Ms Clair has generally stated in her
25	Direct Testimony, ComEd has developed a business process for
26	customers, who choose to switch to delivery services, by not billing those
27	customers separately for any outstanding balances until such balances
28	are fully paid off. This is the complete opposite of what has been
29	designated as an acceptable business practice by the UBP group, a group
30	that Ms. Clair has personally been involved with and whose goals ComEd
31	has aligned itself with. One would think that if ComEd did not agree with
32	Section V, Section 8(a) of the August 1, 2000 UBP Report, it would

publicly say so.

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Q.

If the Commission does not agree with your recommendation that all utilities should be uniform in the posting order of single billing remittances and order utilities to separately bill for unpaid balances for bundled services, what other remedies to you have?

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One option for NewEnergy would be to file a formal complaint against ComEd and seek relief from the ICC. However, this option does nothing for uniformity and will only prolong customer confusion about outstanding delivery services balances that they thought were paid. NewEnergy could choose to not offer single billing services in the future, but NewEnergy's customers value this service and NewEnergy has invested a considerable amount of resources in providing this service. However, if the Commission does not order ComEd to change its current posting logic and NewEnergy continues to be exposed to financial liabilities as its above-described analysis shows. NewEnergy will be forced to re-evaluate offering single billing services. NewEnergy hopes this is not ComEd's goal given its current posting logic. If this is the case, then the outcome of what Section 16-118(b) allows RESs to do will result in a failed experiment because NewEnergy knows no other RES offering single billing services. On the other hand, NewEnergy could start charging ComEd for collection services by retaining 30% of all outstanding bundled balances that NewEnergy processes because regardless of what ComEd

wants to call these outstanding balances, in reality these balances are really from bundled services rendered by ComEd.

Q.

Ms. Clair offers alternatives for RESs concerned about having customer payments applied to outstanding balances due before being applied to current bundled delivery service charges on page 11 of her testimony. Do you agree these are viable alternatives?

8 , **A.**  No. Her alternatives would be punitive for both customers and RESs. Her alternatives center around the concept that if a RES doesn't like how ComEd is posting payments to outstanding balances, then the RES' customer could always get a dual bill. The outcome of this philosophy will negate the very benefits of a single bill that she espouses on page 5 of her Direct Testimony. The better approach is for ComEd to fix its billing system and comply with its Rider SBO and the Act.

Q. Does this conclude your testimony?

**A.** 

Yes.

Commonwealth Edison Company 2100 Swift Drive Oak Brook, IL 60523

NE	Exhibit No	١.	
			(KIW-3)



October 4, 2000

Julie Hextel
NewEnergy Midwest, LLC
309 West Washington Street
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Dear Julie,

ComEd has completed an analysis of all Single Bill Option accounts specifically looking for open balances present at the time of the first delivery service bill. Attached is a file of the current NewEnergy accounts that have been confirmed to have no outstanding bundled balances. According to the Act, SBO Rider, and as NewEnergy and ComEd discussed during our settlement discussions, a supplier providing customers with SBO must include all past due debits/credits for unbundled balances on ComEd's delivery service bill.

This letter notifies NewEnergy that the accounts on the attached list have no bundled balances associated with them and that all current and future balances need to be posted and collected by NewEnergy and remitted to ComEd as specified in Rider SBO.

If you have any questions on this, please give me a call to discuss.

Sincerely,

Chip Tenorio
Account Manager

Electric Supplier Services Department

cc: Sally Clair - ComEd

Anne McGlynn - ComEd

Bob Ricobene - ComEd

Chuck Sutton – NewEnergy